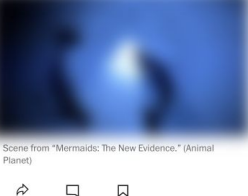


Animal Planet nets its biggest audience with ‘Mermaids’

By Lisa de Moraes

May 28, 2013 at 7:22 p.m. EDT



Scene from “Mermaids: The New Evidence.” (Animal Planet)



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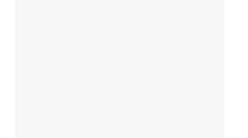
Animal Planet is mulling more mermaids after Sunday night’s “Mermaids: The New Evidence” — its follow-up to last year’s “Mermaids: The Body Found” “documentary” — clocked the network’s biggest audience. Ever.

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“It has us thinking about what we do next,” Animal Planet GM Marjorie Kaplan acknowledged to The TV Column — after Nielsen noted that “The New Evidence” attracted an average of 3.6 million viewers.

“We’re thinking big,” said Kaplan about internal talks to keep this ratings gravy train going.

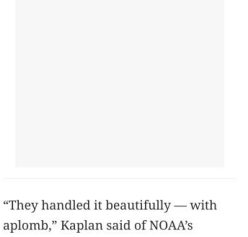
One year earlier, “The Body Found” netted 3.4 million viewers. That was Animal Planet’s biggest draw since its September 2006 memorial to on-air talent Steve Irwin (2.7 million viewers), who died after being pierced in the chest by a stingray barb while filming an underwater documentary.



Animal Planet did not give the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration a heads-up last weekend that it was running a second mermaid “docu.” In “The New Evidence,” a “Paul Robertson” — described to viewers as a former NOAA scientist who led last year’s “investigation” — was interviewed by “journalist Jon Frankel” about “new evidence of mermaids that only has come forward in the past year.”

When the original “Mermaids” special ran, NOAA got pelted with so many demands for more information on its mermaid discoveries that the agency felt compelled to issue a statement on its Web site that said: “No evidence of aquatic humanoids has ever been found.”

That, in spite of all the “evidence” presented in the first program, including cave drawings, mysterious deep-ocean bloop and evidence of injuries to beached whales that could only have been perpetrated by fish that were part-woman with an axe to grind against whales.



“They handled it beautifully — with aplomb,” Kaplan said of NOAA’s response to the brouhaha over the first mermaid special. She added that she’s “pleased to note [that] you can’t be sued by the government” even for making a living hell of the lives of staffers at one of its agencies by airing horseradish masquerading as documentary.